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# **Military Accession and Security Clearance Screening Impact On Early and Adverse Separation**

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**BACKGROUND**

This report is the third in a series of four sponsored by the Under Secretary of Defense, Personnel and Readiness USD(P&R) examining military accession screening policy. The two prior studies identified significant differences in the amount of criminal record information known to accessions processing personnel versus that known to security screening personnel. This study examines the role of subjects' self-reporting in these differences. It also examines the relationship between successful military service and the full criminal background screening process that includes applicants' self-reports, Recruiting Command waiver processing, and security screening criminal record checks. The final report in this series will integrate findings from this study with other research on military waiver practices to help identify the best balance between efficient, effective, and fair screening for "bad apples" in the military accessions process.

**HIGHLIGHTS**

Findings from previous studies on the different rates of criminal record detection and waiver issuance were explained only in part by the extent to which applicants withheld criminal background information from Recruiting Command personnel. Waiver issuance was most strongly associated with early separation. Where criminal arrests were known based on self-reports and/or criminal record checks and waivers were not on record, the likelihood of early separation tended to be higher. This could not be explained away by the rejection or dismissal of applicants once their crimes became known. Results emphasize the importance of Recruiting Commands actively engaging applicants in waiver processing when applicants self-admit criminal arrests and convictions or have them detected through criminal record checks.



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## **PREFACE**

This report is the third in a series of four that investigate military accession policy and practices pertaining to criminal background screening. These studies are based on available data on military security clearance applicants' self-reports, Recruiting Command screening, and Defense Security Service (DSS) screening of criminal backgrounds. Findings from these studies are expected to reinforce the importance of the Military services' commitment to screening applicants through local and state agency checks wherever applicants have lived, worked, or gone to school for a significant period of time. The findings are also expected to support discussions about how to better integrate information found in different screening processes, for the betterment of each.

James A. Riedel  
Director

## PREFACE



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### INTRODUCTION

For military accessions, criminal backgrounds are evaluated through moral character waiver screening at the time of in-processing into the military and later through background checks conducted as part of personnel security screening. Moral character waivers serve as a means to allow subjects with potentially disqualifying criminal convictions to join or advance in the military as though they were fully qualified. Previous research has shown that criminal records are found through background investigation record checks at much higher rates than waivers are documented for criminal convictions in the military accessions process. One purpose of this study was to explore the extent to which this difference is due to applicants falsifying criminal backgrounds when completing their Standard Form 86, *Questionnaire for National Security Positions* (SF-86).<sup>1</sup>

Additionally, in waiver research, early separation and separation from military service for adverse reasons have often been used as outcome measures for evaluating the efficacy of waiver screening. To date, these studies have not had the benefit of data on subjects' self-reports on the SF-86 or from the results of state and local record checks conducted as part of security screening.

This report addressed the potential effects of criminal backgrounds and criminal background screening—including self-reporting, waiver, and preservice criminal history statuses—on early separation and adverse separation for a population of security clearance applicants. In this study, early separation is defined as the failure to complete initial service obligations, while adverse separation is defined as separation due to misconduct, drug or alcohol abuse, poor performance, personality disorders, or fraudulent enlistment. Results show the impact of self-reporting on waiver issuances and the probabilities and odds of subjects separating early during their first term or for adverse reasons, based on self-reporting, moral character waiver issuance, and criminal records.

### METHODS

Analyses were based on a population of 32,712 security clearance applicants joining the military for the first time. The population included those with initial NACLC or SSBI investigations closed in CY03 or CY04. Additionally, applicants had to have undergone waiver screening, completed SF-86s, and have results from local agency checks performed by personnel security investigators. All applicants had Uniformed Service Initial Entry dates within one month of the date that their SF-86

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout this report, SF-86 forms are also referred to as personnel security questionnaires (PSQs).

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

was validated, and none of the subjects indicated prior military service on their SF-86.<sup>2</sup>

Data for this study were drawn from four sources: (1) Active duty and reserve components' personnel data from the Defense Manpower Data Center (DMDC), (2) the U.S. Military Entrance Processing Command (USMEPCOM) Examination and Accession File, (3) Case Control Management System (CCMS) reports of investigations (ROIs) for national security clearances conducted by the Defense Security Service (DSS) and closed during CY03 and CY04, and (4) the SF-86. The Active Duty and Reserve Components Personnel data provide information about applicants' military rank, service, component, and transaction history. Data from USMEPCOM indicate whether subjects received criminal character waivers prior to joining the military, while ROI data include results of state and local agency checks, including law enforcement agencies, criminal courts, and state repositories. SF-86 data serve as the source of subjects' self-reported criminal behaviors.

Subjects' military histories were examined for evidence of early separation during their first term. If subjects had left the military at any point during their contracted military services, the reasons for separation and characterization of service were assessed. Analyses in this report present the probability of subjects separating early or for adverse reasons, with reference to preservice law violations, waiver issuances, self-reporting of criminal behavior, and military characteristics. Additionally, the odds for each branch-component group were compared to the overall odds of early or adverse separation within the Armed Forces as a whole and within each specific branch as a whole. These analyses indicate which groups—based on criminal conduct, self-reporting status, waiver issuance, and military service—were more likely than average to separate early or adversely.

## FINDINGS

### Influence of Self-Reporting on Waiver Issuance

Previous research has shown that criminal records are found through background investigation record checks at higher rates than waivers are documented for criminal convictions in the military accessions process. This study examined the extent to which this could be explained by lack of self-reported offenses on the SF-86.

- About half of the difference in rates of criminal record detection and waiver issuance can be explained by omissions of information about arrests on the SF-86.

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<sup>2</sup> All subjects in this study had applied for national security clearances, so they represent a segment of subjects joining the military for the first time whom Recruiting Commands deemed as eligible for clearance. As such, the study population is biased towards those who have already passed one layer of screening.

- Nearly 40% of applicants with criminal conduct waivers had neither self-reported information on their SF-86 nor convictions identified through security clearance investigation record checks.

### Variables Associated with Early Separation

#### Single Effects:

- Subjects who had not been issued moral character waivers were more likely to separate early than those with waivers ( $p < .001$ ). The overall rate of applicants separating early was 14.1% ( $n=4,378$ ) among subjects who did not have moral character waivers compared with 9.1% ( $n=148$ ) for those who did.
- Subjects without criminal records requiring waivers were more likely to separate early than those who had waivable convictions ( $p < .001$ ). The rate of early separation for applicants with criminal conviction records was 11.7% ( $n=298$ ) compared with 14.0% ( $n=4,228$ ) of those without.

#### Combined Effects:

- The strongest association with likelihood of early separation was found for the combined effect of self-reports with waiver issuance. The interactions of preservice criminal conduct, self-reporting, and waiver issuance on early separation was also significant.

### Variables Associated with Adverse Separation

#### Single Effects:

- Subjects who self-reported criminal offenses were more likely to separate for unfavorable reasons than those who did not self-report.
- Subjects with criminal records requiring waivers were more likely to separate for unfavorable reasons than those who had no waivable convictions. While the association was statistically significant, the practical significance was questionable because the actual difference in rates was only about 1%. The use of adverse separation as an outcome measure probably was not as good as using other measures of in-service misconduct.

#### Combined Effects:

- None of the combined influences of self-reporting, waiver issuance, and preservice criminal conduct significantly was associated with adverse separation.

### Relative Likelihood of Early Separation

Odds represent the probability of an outcome occurring relative to the probability of it not occurring. In this study, the odds of early separation represented the likelihood of subjects separating early compared to the probability of them completing their terms of service. Odds ratios, or relative odds, compare the odds of

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a certain outcome within one group to the odds of that outcome within another group.

- The highest odds of early separation relative to the population as a whole tended to be found among applicants without moral waivers. For the population as a whole, the highest likelihood of early separation pertained to those who self-reported arrests but for whom waivers were not issued and records were not found. The lowest odds of early separation relative to the population average occurred with applicants for whom criminal offense information was documented through all three screening sources or through only waiver processing.
- Relative to the population average, the highest odds of early separation were found for applicants in the Navy and Army Reserves. Applicants in the Marine Corps Regular component and, to a lesser extent, Air Force applicants in any component, had among the lowest odds of early separation relative to the population, regardless of whether criminal involvements were detected from any source.
- Army and Navy Reserve applicants who were not issued waivers but who were known to have criminal arrests through self-reports or record checks had the highest likelihoods of early separation relative to the population as a whole.
- Within the Army, Reservists had a higher likelihood of early separation than the Regular and Guard components, regardless of screening measures. The highest likelihood of early separation was found for Army Reservists who self-disclosed arrests but who were neither issued waivers nor found to have records based on record checks. For the Army Regular component, those who were known to have criminal records only through criminal record checks had relatively high likelihood of early separation. Within the Army, the lowest likelihood of early separation pertained to Guard component applicants who were identified through self-reporting, waiver processing, and record checks as having criminal records.
- Within the Navy, Reservists had higher odds of early separation than Regular component members. For the Reservists, the highest odds of early separation pertained to those who were not issued waivers but who had either self-reported offense information or hits from record checks. Within the Regular component, the highest odds of early separation were found for those who had no evidence of criminal involvements, though these odds were still less than the average for the Navy as a whole.
- The highest likelihood of separation within the Air Force was found for Regular component applicants who were known to have criminal convictions only through self-reports. The number of Air Force applicants in the population was small, however.
- Within the Marine Corps, which had the lowest likelihood of early separation overall, Reservists had higher likelihoods of early separation compared with the Regular component. Within the Reserves, the highest odds of early separation pertained to those who were only detected as having criminal records based on criminal record checks. Unlike for the other military branches, Marine

Reservists who did not self-report and were not found to have criminal records based on record checks but who were issued waivers had the second highest likelihood of early separation. Consistent with patterns for the other services, Marine Reserve applicants who were not issued waivers in spite of self-reported arrests had higher odds of early separation than those who had no indications of criminal pasts. Within the Regular component, applicants with indications of criminal conduct from all three screening sources had the highest likelihood of early separation. At the same time, the lowest was found for those who self-reported arrests, were issued criminal conduct waivers, but for whom criminal records were not found.

## DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Consistent with other study findings, this research effort identified differences in the rates at which criminal records were found in security clearance background investigations and criminal conduct waivers were issued during military entrance processing. These differences could be explained only in part by omissions by applicants on their security clearance questionnaires. At the same time, a significant proportion of cases were found where criminal conduct waivers were the only source of information about applicants' criminal backgrounds. These findings highlight the importance of information sharing between the military accessions process and the security clearance background investigation process to ensure that decisionmakers in each have the most complete information possible.

The relationships between first-term early or adverse separation and subjects' self-reporting, waiver, and preservice criminal history statuses were examined in this report. The results highlighted the importance of moral character waiver processing in mitigating the link between criminal backgrounds and early separation but not adverse separation. Having a criminal conviction record or failure to report records of conviction each had a statistically significant association with separation from the military for adverse reasons. The magnitude of the difference was too small to be of practical significance. The absence of a meaningful difference could be due to the limits of using adverse separation codes documented at time of separation as a measure of in-service misconduct as opposed to such things as Article 15s, Captain's masts, courts-martial, reductions in rank, or forfeitures of pay.

With respect to early separation, if subjects self-reported offenses or had waivable offenses detected during local agency checks, but moral character waivers were not issued, rates of early separation were generally higher. This tended to be especially true for applicants whose only source of criminal involvements was based on results of criminal record checks that occurred after completion of SF-86 questionnaires and after waiver processing. This finding could reflect, only in part, the impact of military branch intolerance for applicants who failed to disclose their criminal histories on the SF-86. Often, Recruiting Commands were not aware of applicants' criminal backgrounds in time to initiate waiver screening.

Based on findings from this study, the following recommendations are offered:

- **Recommendation:** As recommended in prior studies, the DUSD(CI&S) and USD(P&R) should evaluate whether optimal policy and procedures are in place for ensuring that the military services receive complete and timely results of security screening that produce information regarding their accessions' criminal backgrounds.
- **Recommendation:** If warranted, Recruiting Commands may want to review and strengthen, as necessary, policy and procedures for taking action against applicants with criminal arrests and convictions who do not document such information as required on their PSQs.
- **Recommendation:** Recruiting Commands may want to consider expanding waiver processing for applicants who disclose any arrest information on their PSQs. In particular, Recruiting Commands may want to establish operating procedures for acquiring more information on offenses that subjects report on their PSQs, including conviction status for all listed arrests.

Evidence in this report indicated that subjects were issued waivers even though they did not disclose any type of criminal conduct on their SF-86s; this suggests that the information was detected during another part of the in-processing procedure. In order to ensure that subjects' complete criminal histories are collected by personnel security investigators and available to security clearance adjudicators, the following recommendations are also provided:

- **Recommendation.** The USD(P&R) and The Office of the Deputy Under Secretary of Defense, Counterintelligence and Security (USD(I), DUSD(CI&S)) should consider establishing or reinforcing regulations that require accessions processing personnel to document all criminal arrest information requested on applicants' PSQs.
- **Recommendation.** DUSD(CI&S) and OPM should, in cooperation with USD(P&R), include checks of DMDC records of military waivers in security clearance background investigations of military personnel. Investigators should use this information to ensure that they have maximally complete coverage of subjects' criminal backgrounds.

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## INTRODUCTION

For military accessions, criminal backgrounds are evaluated through moral character waiver screening at the time of in-processing into the military and later through background checks conducted as part of personnel security screening. Waiver screening entails Recruiting Commands' review of the nature and seriousness of criminal backgrounds, consideration of evidence of rehabilitation, and judgments about likelihood of recurrence. Moral character waivers serve as a means to allow subjects with potentially disqualifying criminal convictions to join or advance in the military as though they were fully qualified. Personnel security screening requires federal, state, and local law enforcement agency record checks wherever applicants lived, worked, or went to school for 6 months or more over a 5- to 7-year period preceding their applications. These results help inform decisions about applicants' eligibility for security clearance.

Previous research has shown a disconnect between rates that criminal records are found through personnel security screening investigations and rates at which waivers are issued in the military accessions process (Neal & Buck, 2008). Waivers may be issued whenever qualifying criminal involvements are self-admitted by military applicants or become known through recruiting station local area record checks. Most record checks, however, are completed after subjects sign their contracts to serve in the military. This study examined how much of this difference is associated with applicants' failure to disclose information on their personnel security questionnaires.

If applicants do not self-disclose and offenses are not detected through recruiting station checks, or through FBI checks if done prior to applicants' shipping to initial training, then Recruiting Commands may not know to initiate waiver screening. Therefore, one purpose of this study was to examine the extent to which low rates of waivers relative to rates of criminal records found were associated with applicants' failure to record arrests on their personnel security questionnaires.

Neal and Buck (2008) also found significant numbers of cases where waivers were issued to subjects for whom personnel security background investigation record checks failed to identify offense information. This may be due to offenses being vetted in the accessions process but then not being recorded on personnel security questionnaires. If self-report rates in these cases are low even though recruiters clearly know of convictions, then findings may indicate the need for emphasizing the importance of complete and accurate information on Standard Form 86, *Questionnaire for National Security Positions* (SF-86) for the security screening process.

By including measures of self-reporting and comprehensive results of local criminal record checks, data available for this study enabled an examination of the extent to which reported associations between criminal backgrounds and in-service problems were mitigated by self-reporting and waiver screening. At the request of the

## **INTRODUCTION**

research sponsors, measures of in-service problems were limited to early separation, as indicated by failure to complete first-term contractual obligations, and separation for adverse reasons such as misconduct, drug or alcohol abuse, personality disorders, fraudulent entry, or poor performance. In the absence of early separation and separation for adverse reasons, applicants were defined as having served successfully, while recognizing that they may have had in-service misconduct that was not captured by the measures used.

## METHODOLOGY

This section describes the data sources that were used to evaluate subjects' criminal histories, waiver issuances, reasons for separation, and rates of early separation. Descriptions of the population analyzed in this study are also provided. This population included all subjects who joined the military for the first time with initial NACLC or SSBI investigations closed in CY03 or CY04.<sup>3</sup> Additionally, we selected only those subjects for whom Military Entrance Processing Stations (MEPS) had records of waiver screening, complete SF-86s, and results from local agency checks performed by personnel security investigators. First-time service members were selected by examining subjects' SF-86 validation dates, Uniformed Service Initial Entry Calendar Dates (from active duty and reserve components personnel data from the Defense Manpower Data Center [DMDC]), and responses on the SF-86 regarding previous service. If subjects claimed no previous service on the SF-86 and their Initial Entry dates were within one month of their SF-86 validation dates, they were characterized as first-time service members.<sup>4</sup>

Significant associations between self-reporting, waiver screening, criminal record check results, early separation, and adverse separation were evaluated using logistic regression and chi-square tests. The extent to which screening measures increased or decreased the likelihood of early or adverse separation was determined through cross-tabulations and odds-ratio calculations.

## DATA SOURCES

Data for this study were drawn from four sources: (1) active duty and reserve components' personnel data from DMDC, (2) the U.S. Military Entrance Processing Command (USMEPCOM) Examination and Accession File, (3) reports of investigations (ROIs) for national security clearances conducted by the Defense Security Service (DSS) and closed during CY03 and CY04, and (4) the SF-86.

### **Active Duty and Reserve Components Personnel Data**

DMDC military personnel files listed below provided the following data: military component, branch of military service, service member rank, initial entry date into the Uniformed Service, evidence of separation, reason for separation, character of service, and reenlistment eligibility.

***Active Duty Military Personnel Master File.*** The Active Duty Military Personnel Master File maintains records on all applicants on active duty for the United States

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<sup>3</sup> All subjects in this study had applied for national security clearances, so they represent a segment of subjects joining the military for the first time whom Recruiting Commands deemed as eligible for clearance. A very small number (n=19) of subjects had NAC investigations that included local agency checks.

<sup>4</sup> A one-month buffer was incorporated to include subjects whose personnel security questionnaires (PSQs) may not have been immediately processed after subjects originally completed them.

## METHODOLOGY

Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, Public Health Service, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

***Reserve Components Common Personnel Data System (RCCPDS).*** The RCCPDS contains personnel data on all current and former members of the Reserve components in the Army National Guard, Army Reserve, Naval Reserve, Air Force Reserve, Air National Guard, Marine Corps Reserve, and Coast Guard Reserve.

Only Army, Navy, Air Force, or Marine Corps applicants with evidence of initial enlistment, based on their Uniformed Service Initial Entry Calendar Dates and SF-86 military history responses (see below) were selected for this report. This helped ensure that criminal history information surfaced during local agency checks occurred prior to subjects joining the military.

### **Reports of Investigations (ROIs)**

Security clearance background investigations for DoD military personnel include (1) National Agency Checks with Local Agency Checks and Credit Checks (NACLIC) for access to Confidential and Secret classified information, (2) Single Scope Background Investigations (SSBI) for access to Top Secret and Special Compartmentalized Information (TS/SCI), and (3) reinvestigations for each of the preceding categories. Each of these investigations includes Local Agency Checks (LACs) which entail searches of law enforcement, criminal courts, and state repositories as appropriate where subjects self-admit records and where subjects lived, worked, or went to school for 6 months or more over a 5- or 7-year span, depending on the level of investigation.

Conviction dates for offenses were not available for this study. To help ensure that analyses included only subjects whose criminal conduct occurred prior to their accession dates, this study focused on subjects undergoing initial NACLIC or SSBI investigations closed in CY03 and CY04.

In building the database for the study, 19 applicants were inadvertently included who were investigated using only Extended National Agency Checks (XNACs), which are not security clearance investigations. These checks do include local agency checks, however, if subjects self-admitted to offenses or if FBI checks identified offenses.

The level of detail provided by investigators within ROIs varies widely. Some investigators provide complete records, including the names of agencies, departments, or courts in which records were sought; dates on which records were checked; arrest dates; dates on which subjects were charged; levels of offenses (e.g., citation, misdemeanor, felony); types of offenses (e.g., alcohol, drug, miscellaneous other, etc.); and dispositions (e.g., dismissal, acquittal, conviction). At a minimum, almost all investigators record the name of the agency checked, the date on which the records were checked, and whether or not any criminal history records were

present. ROIs were coded to the extent possible to reflect types, levels, and dispositions of offenses and whether there were convictions.

Applicants typically had multiple record checks due to the investigative scope requirement of covering everywhere applicants lived, worked, or went to school for 6 months or more in the 5 to 7 years preceding the date of their SF-86. Each ROI for individual record checks was coded for evidence of a criminal conviction and aggregated by applicant. Only a measure of the presence or absence of conviction evidence was retained in the aggregation. The number of times conviction information was found for an individual applicant was not included because investigators could contact multiple agencies to collect information about a single offense.

### **U.S. Military Entrance Processing Command (USMEPCOM) Examination and Accession File**

For this study, subjects were classified based on evidence of moral character waivers for criminal conduct. Waiver data are documented in the USMEPCOM Examination and Accession File. Accession (ACC) waiver codes pertain to waivers that are granted prior to applicants signing their contracts. Delayed Entry Program (DEP) waiver codes pertain to waivers that are granted after applicants sign their accession contracts but before they ship to their basic training.

Waiver data are classified into alpha-numeric codes. These codes were established by DoD as a way to standardize and summarize waivers granted for accession and DEP applicants across all military branches. The alpha-numeric format provides information on (1) the level of offense (i.e., minor and serious traffic, misdemeanor, or felony), (2) whether the offender was adjudicated as a juvenile or adult, and (3) the level of authorization (i.e., recruiting station, Recruiting Command).

DMDC maintains transaction records on military applicants who are processed at any of the MEPS facilities. USMEPCOM sends data from U.S. Military Processing Command Integrated Resources System (USMIRS) to DMDC in weekly and monthly updates. DMDC records store up to three accession waiver codes and three DEP waiver codes.<sup>5</sup> Only those subjects with evidence<sup>6</sup> of waiver screening processed through MEPS were included in this study.

### **Case Control Management System (CCMS)**

All military personnel who require access to secure facilities or classified information must complete a personnel security questionnaire, which is used to collect information regarding subjects' suitability and trustworthiness. For the investigations included in this study, applicants completed the electronic version of

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<sup>5</sup> When DMDC receives a waiver update on applicants with three existing waiver codes, the first waiver code is pulled from the master file to allow for the inclusion of the new waiver code. The original waiver code is then archived in a historical file.

<sup>6</sup> This excluded some subjects who were joining the military for the first time as officers.

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the SF-86. This version is commonly referred to as the Electronic Personnel Security Questionnaire (EPSQ). SF-86 data were drawn from PERSEREC archives of the DSS Case Control Management System (CCMS) database. The SF-86 was the primary data source for subjects' demographic information, including age, gender, and military branch. Additionally, the SF-86 provided information about subjects' self-reported criminal and military histories. Finally, subjects' responses to the question "Have you served in the United States military?" in conjunction with their Uniformed Service Initial Entry Calendar Dates, were used to select only those subjects with evidence of initial enlistment.

### MILITARY POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS

Military applicant characteristics included military component and branch that initiated the background investigation, type of security clearance investigation, military service rank, and enlistment status. Table 1 presents the number and percentage of subjects within each of these groups.

***Military Branch.*** Applicants who were enlisted or commissioned in the U.S. Army made up 64.5% (n=21,106). Marine Corps applicants comprised 28.6% of the population (n=9,351). Navy applicants accounted for approximately 5% of the population (n=1,734). The Air Force branch included 521 applicants, or 1.6% of the population used in this study.

***Military Component.*** Most of the applicants in the population were part of the regular military component (75.8%; n=24,796). National Guard (n=3,590) and Reserve components (n=4,326) comprised 11.0% and 13.2% of the population, respectively.

***Military Branch-Component.*** Combining branch with component, the Army Regular component represented about 47% of the population (n=15,376), with the Army Guard making up 10.8% (n=3,535). The Army Reserves comprised 6.7% (n=2,195) of all subjects in this study. The Regular component of the Marine Corps represented 25% of the population (n=8,104), and the Marine Corps Reserves, 3.8% (n=1,247). Each component of the Air Force represented less than 1.5% of the population. The Navy Regular and Navy Reserves comprised 2.7% and 2.6%, of the population, respectively (n=869 and n=865).

***Investigation Type.*** Applicants for whom national agency checks with local agency checks and credit checks (NACLC) investigations were initiated made up almost 89% (n=28,995) of the population. Approximately 11% (n=3,698) of the applicants were submitted for single-scope background investigations (SSBI) and just 0.1% (n=19) were submitted for only National Agency Checks (NAC).<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Due to the small number of NAC investigations and for purposes of brevity, references to the types of investigations found in this population will state only "initial NACLC and SSBI investigations."



**Service Rank.** Most of the service members were enlisted personnel (96.6%; n=31,586). Officers accounted for 3.1% (n=1,006) of the population. Warrant officers comprised 0.4% (n=120) of the population.<sup>8</sup>

**Table 1**  
**Military Characteristics for Subjects who Joined the Military for the First Time with Initial NACLC or SSBI Investigations**

<b><i>Military Characteristic</i></b>	<b><i>N</i></b>	<b><i>% of 32,712</i></b>
<b><i>Branch:</i></b>		
Army	21,106	64.5
Navy	1,734	5.3
Air Force	521	1.6
Marine Corps	9,351	28.6
<b><i>Component:</i></b>		
Regular	24,796	75.8
Reserves	4,326	13.2
Guard	3,590	11.0
<b><i>Branch-Component:</i></b>		
Army Regular	15,376	47.0
Army Reserves	2,195	6.7
Army Guard	3,535	10.8
Navy Regular	869	2.7
Navy Reserves	865	2.6
Air Force Guard	447	1.4
Air Force Regular	19	0.1
Air Force Reserves	55	0.2
Marine Corps Regular	8,104	24.8
Marine Corps Reserves	1,247	3.8
<b><i>Investigation Type:</i></b>		
NAC	19	0.1
NACLC	28,995	88.6
SSBI	3,698	11.3
<b><i>Service Rank:</i></b>		
Enlisted	31,586	96.6
Officer	1,006	3.1
Warrant Officer	120	0.4
<b><i>TOTAL:</i></b>	<b>32,712</b>	<b>100.0</b>

## CHARACTERISTICS OF MILITARY SERVICE

Table 2 provides an overview of the character of service among 32,712 subjects who joined the military for the first time with NACLC or SSBI Investigations that closed in CY03 or CY04.

<sup>8</sup> Although warrant officers are typically recruited from the enlisted ranks, all 120 warrant officers in this study were in the Army and had entered the Military services for the first time as warrant officers. According to a DMDC subject expert, the Army sometimes recruits civilian pilots and allows them to enter the Army at the rank of warrant officer. All subjects—enlisted, commissioned officers, and warrant officers—entered the military for the first time within one month of validating their EPSQ. For this project, we selected only those subjects for whom MEPS had records of waiver screening, complete SF-86s, and results from local agency checks performed by personnel security investigators. To create a more robust population, both enlisted and officers who fit this criteria, were joining the military for the first time, and had initial NAC, NACLC, and SSBI investigations were included in the analyses.

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**Evidence of Any Separation from Military Service.** Using military separation dates and InterService Separation Codes provided in the Active Duty and Reserve Military Personnel records, applicants were identified as either having evidence of separation from the military or as having no evidence of separation. Approximately 22% (n=7,217) of subjects had evidence of separating from the military, at least temporarily, whereas 77.9% (n=25,495) had no evidence of separation.

**Table 2**  
**Characteristics of Military Service for Subjects who Joined the Military for the First Time with Initial NACLC or SSBI Investigations**

<i><b>Characteristics of Military Service</b></i>	<b>N</b>	<b>% of 32,712</b>
<b><i>Evidence of Separation:</i></b>		
No evidence of separation	25,495	77.9
Evidence of separation	7,217	22.1
<b><i>Reason for Separation:</i></b>		
Misconduct	458	1.4
Drug-related	235	0.7
Fraudulent enlistment	50	0.2
Pregnancy or parenthood	459	1.4
Personality disorder	85	0.3
Physical or medical ailment	792	2.4
Performance issue	735	2.2
Completed term of service	1,558	4.8
Intra-service transfer	961	2.9
Death	97	0.3
Other	225	0.7
Unknown	1,562	4.8
No evidence of separation	25,495	77.9
<b><i>Character of Service:</i></b>		
Honorable	638	2.0
General honorable	236	0.7
Other than honorable	83	0.3
Bad conduct	1	0.0
Dishonorable	0	0.0
Entry Level/Uncharacterized	299	0.9
Unknown	5,960	18.2
No evidence of separation	25,495	77.9
<b><i>Current Enlistment Status:</i></b>		
Currently Enlisted	26,540	81.1
Currently Separated	6,172	18.9
<b><i>Reenlistment Eligibility:</i></b>		
Not Ineligible	32,706	100.0
Ineligible	6	0.0
<b><i>TOTAL:</i></b>	<b>32,712</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Reason for Separation/InterService Separation Codes.** DMDC generated standardized InterService Separation Codes (ISC) from each Service's Separation Program Designator (SPD) Codes. These ISCs were collapsed into categories as listed in Table 2. ISCs were present in the records of 17.3% of subjects included in the study, with the remaining separated subjects showing no reason for separation (4.8%). Of these separated subjects, the most common reason for separation was completion of terms of service (4.8%; n=1,558). Another 2.9% (n=961) of the

population in the study separated and transferred to another service. Medical or physical conditions were the reason for separation for 792 (2.4%) applicants. Of the remaining service members with evidence of separations, 1.4% (n=458) were separated for misconduct, and 2.2% (n=735) were separated due to poor performance. Applicants who separated because of drugs (n=235), death (n=97), or personality disorders (n=85) each encompassed 0.7% or less of the population. Subjects who were separated due to pregnancy or parenthood represented 1.4% of the population in this study (n=459). Applicants separated for fraudulent enlistment (n=50) accounted for 0.2% of the population. Separations classified as “other” were found for 0.7% of the subjects analyzed (n=225). Separation codes were not found for 77.9% (n=25,495) of applicants because they had no evidence of separation.

**Character of Service.** Data on character of service were available on approximately 3.9% of the population used in this study; the remaining 18.2% of the population with evidence of separation did not have any references to character of service. The majority of these subjects were honorably discharged (2.0%, n=638). About 1% of subjects received general honorable discharges (n=236). Less than 1% of the population received uncharacterized (n=299) or other than honorable (n=83) discharges. Uncharacterized discharges, or entry level separations, are given to service members who separate prior to completing 180 days of military service, or when discharge action was initiated before completion of 180 days of service. Only one subject received a bad conduct discharge. Since early separations were captured through other means and only one subject had a bad conduct discharge, character of service data were not used as indicators of successful service.

**Current Enlistment Status.** To determine their enlistment status, applicants’ most recent enlistment dates were compared to their most recent loss dates, if available, as listed in DMDC Personnel Transaction File records. If no separations occurred after the most recent enlistment dates, applicants were considered to be current enlistees. About 81% (n=26,540) of the service members had evidence of current enlistment.

If the applicants’ Personnel Transaction files listed losses due to civilian life, retirement, death, or drop from military control without subsequent reenlistment dates, applicants were considered separated. As of February 22, 2007, 18.9% (n=6,172) of the population in this study were separated from the military. Since the overall number of subjects with evidence of separation was 7,217, this suggests that 1,045 of the subjects who separated eventually rejoined the military.

**Reenlistment Eligibility.** Almost all of the subjects in this study were classified as “not ineligible” for reenlistment (n=32,706). Less than 0.1% (n=6) had been flagged as ineligible for reenlistment. Due to the lack of variability, this measure was not used in the study.

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### EARLY SEPARATION CHARACTERISTICS

Although subjects sign contracts that require their service in the Armed Forces for designated periods, some service members may be released from duty—either voluntarily or mandatory—before their contracted end dates. To determine early separation, subjects’ Personnel Transaction Type Codes, which were extracted from Active Duty and Reserve Military Personnel files, were examined for evidence of military losses.<sup>9</sup> If losses were detected, the dates on which the separations were effective were compared to subjects’ service obligation end dates. These dates included the following: Active Duty End, Ready Reserve Projected End, Selected Reserve Service Projected End, and Initial Military Service Obligation End. If subjects’ separations occurred prior to their latest obligation end dates, they were considered to have separated early. Subjects who separated due to death were excluded from the study. Table 3 displays the number and percentage of subjects in this study who separated early, broken out by military status.

**Table 3**  
**Number and Percentage of Subjects Joining the Military for the First Time with Initial NACLC or SSBI Investigations by Early Separation Status**

<i>Military Status</i>	<b>Evidence of Early Separation</b>		<b>No Evidence of Early Separation</b>		<b>Total # of subjects (row)</b>
	<b>N</b>	<b>% (row)</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>% (row)</b>	
<b>Branch:</b>					
Army	3,870	18.3	17,236	81.7	21,106
Navy	329	19.0	1,405	81.0	1,734
Air Force	48	9.2	473	90.8	521
Marine Corps	279	3.0	9,072	97.0	9,351
<b>Component:</b>					
Regular	2,959	11.9	21,837	88.1	24,796
Reserves	1,024	23.7	3,302	76.3	4,326
Guard	543	15.1	3,047	84.9	3,590
<b>Branch-Component:</b>					
Army Regular	2,714	17.7	12,662	82.3	15,376
Army Reserves	622	28.3	1,573	71.7	2,195
Army Guard	534	15.1	3,001	84.9	3,535
Navy Regular	100	11.5	769	88.5	869
Navy Reserves	229	26.5	636	73.5	865
Air Force Regular	34	7.6	413	92.4	447
Air Force Reserves	5	26.3	14	73.7	19
Air Force Guard	9	16.4	46	83.6	55
Marine Corps Regular	111	1.4	7,993	98.6	8,104
Marine Corps Reserves	168	13.5	1,079	86.5	1,247
<b>TOTAL:</b>	4,526	13.8	28,186	86.2	32,712

In this population, 13.8% (n=4,526) of subjects separated before their contract expired. Early separation was more common in the Navy (19.0%, n=329) and Army (18.3%, n=3,870) than in the Air Force (9.2%, n=48) or Marine Corps (3.0%, n=279). Likewise, Reserve personnel were more likely to have separations prior to their

<sup>9</sup> Separations are referred to as “losses” in the Personnel Transaction Type Code variable.

contract expirations than either Regular or Guard members (23.7% vs. 11.9% and 15.1%, respectively).

Over one fourth of all subjects in the Army Reserves (28.3%), Navy Reserves (26.5%), and Air Force Reserves (26.3%) separated early. The separation rate was greater than 15% for subjects in the Army Regular (17.7%), Air Force Guard (16.4%), and Army Guard (15.1%). At least 10% of subjects in the Marine Corps Reserves (13.5%) and Navy Regular (11.5%) had evidence of early separation. The regular components of the Air Force (7.6%) and the Marine Corps (1.4%) showed the lowest rates of early separation.

## ADVERSE SEPARATION DESCRIPTIVES

While some subjects separate after they have fulfilled their service obligations or for nonpejorative, voluntary reasons, others are separated for derogatory reasons. Subjects may be involuntarily separated from the military if they acquire misconduct charges, have evidence of drug or alcohol abuse, enlist fraudulently, perform poorly, or have personality issues that make them ineligible for service. These unfavorable reasons, provided by interservice separation codes, were characterized as “adverse” for the purposes of this study.<sup>10</sup>

Determinations of adverse separations were limited to military personnel who had interservice separation codes on file at DMDC. These codes were classified according to the general reason for subjects’ separation. Although 7,217 subjects showed evidence of separation, only 5,655 subjects had interservice separation codes. Therefore, the number of subjects in our population with adverse reasons for separation may be higher than represented.<sup>11</sup>

Table 4 shows the number and percentage of first-time military subjects with NACLC or SSBI investigations closed in CY03 or CY04 who had evidence of adverse separations from the military. In this study, about 4.6% of subjects left the Armed Forces due to negative causes. The Navy showed the highest percentage of subjects with adverse separation (13.4%, n=233). Over 5% of Army personnel separated for adverse reasons (n=1,110). About 2% of subjects in the Air Force and Marine Corps left for unfavorable causes (n=12 and n=141, respectively).

Subjects in the Reserve units were more likely to separate for adverse reasons (7.1%) than subjects in either the Regular units (4.7%) or the National Guard (0.8%). In particular, 37% of subjects from the Air Force Reserves and 22% from the Navy Reserves were separated due to negative reasons (n=7 and n=188, respectively). About 7% of all Marine Corps Reserves and Army Regular personnel

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<sup>10</sup> Subjects can also be discharged due to physical or medical conditions or issues pertaining to pregnancy, parenthood, or other dependents. These reasons are characterized as nonadverse for the purposes of this study.

<sup>11</sup> Although other measures of adverse separation, such as reenlistment eligibility or character of Service, were available, these variables provided too little variance to allow for suitable analyses. These frequencies are provided in Table 2.

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separated for negative reasons (n=91 and n=1,061, respectively). About 5% of subjects in the Regular Navy had unfavorable causes for separation (n=45), compared to 1.8% in the Air Force Guard (n=1). One percent of subjects in the Army Reserves (n=22), Army Guard (n=27), Air Force Regular (n=4), and Marine Corps Regular (n=50) had adverse separations.

**Table 4**  
**Number and Percentage of Subjects Joining the Military for the First Time with Initial NACLC or SSBI Investigations by Adverse Separation Status**

<i>Military Status</i>	<b>Evidence of Adverse Separation</b>		<b>No Evidence of Adverse Separation</b>		<i>Total # of subjects (row)</i>
	<b>N</b>	<b>% (row)</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>% (row)</b>	
<b>Branch:</b>					
Army	1,110	5.3	19,996	94.7	21,106
Navy	233	13.4	1,501	86.6	1,734
Air Force	12	2.3	509	97.7	521
Marine Corps	141	1.5	9,210	98.5	9,351
<b>Component:</b>					
Regular	1,160	4.7	23,636	95.3	24,796
Reserves	308	7.1	4,018	92.9	4,326
Guard	28	0.8	3,562	99.2	3,590
<b>Branch-Component:</b>					
Army Regular	1,061	6.9	14,315	93.1	15,376
Army Reserves	22	1.0	2,173	99.0	2,195
Army Guard	27	0.8	3,508	99.2	3,535
Navy Regular	45	5.2	824	94.8	869
Navy Reserves	188	21.7	677	78.3	865
Air Force Regular	4	0.9	443	99.1	447
Air Force Reserves	7	36.8	12	63.2	19
Air Force Guard	1	1.8	54	98.2	55
Marine Corps Regular	50	0.6	8,054	99.4	8,104
Marine Corps Reserves	91	7.3	1,156	92.7	1,247
<b>TOTAL:</b>	1,496	4.6	31,216	95.4	32,712

## MORAL CHARACTER WAIVER CHARACTERISTICS

Most military applicants with criminal convictions are considered ineligible for service unless they request moral character waivers. For the purpose of issuing waivers, criminal offenses are classified into one of six categories: felony (adult), felony (juvenile), minor traffic, serious traffic, minor nontraffic, and serious nontraffic. Applicants to any branch of the Armed Services who have a single felony conviction must be issued moral character waivers in order to join. Subjects in the Navy, Air Force, or Marine Corps with a single misdemeanor conviction are required to receive moral character waivers; the Army requires waivers for two or more misdemeanor convictions. Waiver issuance depends on several factors, including the severity of the offense, the age of the subject at the time of offense, how long ago the offense occurred, and the likelihood of recurrence (Rose, 2006).

As shown in Table 5, of the 32,712 subjects who joined the military for the first time with NACLC or SSBI investigations closed in 2003 or 2004, 5% were issued

moral character waivers (n=1,635). In this study, the greatest number of these waivers were issued for serious nontraffic offenses (n=970, 3.0%). Waivers for minor traffic offenses were issued to just under 1% of subjects in this study (n=286), while 0.6% had waivers for serious traffic offenses (n=193). Less than 0.5% of subjects were issued waivers for minor nontraffic offenses or for adult and juvenile felonies. The proportion of the population with waivers in this study is lower than average since it includes only applicants who had been selected for security clearance.

**Table 5**  
**Number and Percentage of Subjects Joining the Military for the First Time with Initial NACLIC or SSBI Investigations by Moral character waiver Status**

<i><b>Criminal Waiver Type</b></i>	<b>Criminal Waiver Status</b>			
	<b>Yes</b>		<b>No</b>	
	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
Felony: Adult	81	0.2	32,631	99.8
Felony: Juvenile	54	0.2	32,658	99.8
Minor Traffic	286	0.9	32,426	99.1
Serious Traffic	193	0.6	32,519	99.4
Minor Nontraffic	137	0.4	32,575	99.6
Serious Nontraffic	970	3.0	31,742	97.0
Any Moral character waiver	1,635	5.0	31,077	95.0

## CRIMINAL RECORD CHARACTERISTICS

In addition to self-reported criminal records, data on subjects' criminal histories were extracted from ROIs. ROIs contained results of state and local agency criminal record checks performed for security clearance investigations. ROI data were coded based on whether criminal offense information was found during the criminal record check. Criminal offense information could represent citations, arrests without convictions, and convictions. Where offense information was found, ROI information was coded to reflect the level and type of offense. Additionally, ROI offense data were coded for clear evidence of conviction.

Table 6 presents the results of local and state agency checks performed by security clearance investigators on subjects in our study, broken out by conviction status and type of criminal record. Moral character waivers were required only for subjects with relevant convictions, so this study focused on subjects with felony or misdemeanor convictions that required waivers.

About 8% of the applicants had misdemeanor or felony convictions that would require waivers in order to join the military (n=2,545). Less than 1% of subjects had felony convictions (n=82) all of whom would require waivers. A much higher percentage of subjects had evidence of at least one felony arrest (2.4%, n=783). Likewise, 19.0% (n=6,203) had misdemeanor arrests or convictions, and 13.5% (n=4,420) had citations. Nearly 20% of the subjects in this study had evidence of felonies or misdemeanors, regardless of conviction status (n=6,400).

**Table 6**  
**Number and Percentage of Subjects Joining the Military for the First Time with Initial NACLC or SSBI Investigations by Preservice Criminal Record Status**

<i>Type of Criminal Record</i>	<b>Criminal Record Status</b>			
	<b>Yes</b>		<b>No</b>	
	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
<b><i>Evidence of Conviction:</i></b>				
Felony	82	0.3	32,630	99.7
Misdemeanor	4,437	13.6	28,275	86.4
Felony or Misdemeanor	4,519	13.8	28,193	86.2
Felony or Misdemeanor Conviction(s) Requiring Waiver <sup>1</sup>	2,545	7.8	30,167	92.2
<b><i>Regardless of Conviction Status</i></b>				
Felony	783	2.4	31,929	97.6
Misdemeanor	6,203	19.0	26,509	81.0
Citation	4,420	13.5	28,292	86.5
Felony or Misdemeanor	6,400	19.6	26,312	80.4
Felony, Misdemeanor, or Citation	7,831	23.9	24,881	76.1

<sup>1</sup>The Air Force, Army, Marine Corps, and Navy require moral waivers for subjects with one felony conviction. The Air Force, Marine Corps, and Navy require moral waivers for subjects with *one* or more misdemeanor convictions. The Army requests moral waivers only if the subject has *two* or more misdemeanor convictions.

## SELF-REPORTING CHARACTERISTICS

Service members who require access to classified material must apply for national security clearances. As part of this process, applicants complete the SF-86, which requires them to disclose their past criminal charges by answering the following questions:

- 23(a) Have you ever been charged with or convicted of any felony offense? (Include those under Uniform Code of Military Justice)
- 23(b) Have you ever been charged with or convicted of a firearms or explosives offense?
- 23(c) Are there currently any charges pending against you for any criminal offenses?
- 23(d) Have you ever been charged with or convicted of any offense(s) related to alcohol or drugs?
- 23(e) In the last 7 years, have you been subject to court martial or other disciplinary proceedings under the Uniform Code of Military Justice? (Include non-judicial, Captain's mast, etc.)<sup>12</sup>
- 23(f) In the last 7 years, have you been arrested for, charged with, or convicted of any offense(s) not listed in response to a, b, c, d, or e above? (Leave out traffic fines of less than \$150 unless the violation was alcohol or drug related.)

Table 7 presents the number and percentage of subjects who self-reported criminal offenses within each branch and component of the Armed Forces. About 21% of the

<sup>12</sup> Since the subjects in this study were joining the military for the first time, there were no self-reported military disciplinary records.



subjects reported one or more criminal offenses. Most of these offenses were classified as miscellaneous offenses, meaning that they were unrelated to drugs, alcohol, firearms, or explosives and were less serious than a felony (n=5,372, 16.4%). Approximately 6.5% of subjects reported drug- or alcohol-related offenses (n=2,136). Less than 1% of subjects claimed felony offenses (n=306), crimes related to firearms or explosives (n=74), or pending charges (n=30). Subjects were required to report charges or arrests regardless of final disposition; therefore, subjects may have disclosed charges for which they were ultimately found not guilty.

**Table 7**  
**Number and Percentage of Subjects Joining the Military for the First Time with Initial NACLC or SSBI Investigations by Criminal Self-Reporting Status**

<i>Type of Offense Reported</i>	<b>Criminal Self-Reporting Status</b>			
	<b>Yes</b>		<b>No</b>	
	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
Felony	306	0.9	32,406	99.1
Firearms or Explosives	74	0.2	32,638	99.8
Pending	30	0.1	32,682	99.9
Drugs or Alcohol	2,136	6.5	30,576	93.5
Miscellaneous Other	5,372	16.4	27,340	83.6
Any Self-Reported Offense	6,935	21.2	25,777	78.8

Self-reporting rates varied according to the type of criminal records found in subjects' criminal histories. In general, as seen in Table 8, subjects were more likely to disclose more serious crimes if there was evidence of convictions. Over 71% (n=57) of subjects with felony convictions disclosed their offenses, compared to 62.5% (n=2,775) of those with misdemeanor convictions. Subjects with more serious offenses, especially convictions, may assume that their criminal records are more likely to be detected by recruiters and investigators than subjects with less egregious offenses. Within this study, about two-thirds of subjects with evidence of convictions requiring waivers reported at least one offense on their SF-86 (n=1,690).

A slightly different pattern was apparent when examining rates of self-reports for criminal records regardless of known conviction status. Subjects with misdemeanors and felonies reported offenses at similar rates, although those with felonies had higher reporting rates. Over 60% of subjects with felony (n=511) or misdemeanor (n=3,763) arrests or charges reported some type of criminal offense, indicating that almost 40% of subjects with felony or misdemeanor offenses did not document their charges on their SF-86.

**Table 8**  
**Number and Percentage of Subjects Joining the Military for the First Time with Initial NACLC or SSBI Investigations with Preservice Criminal Records by Self-Reporting Status**

<i>Type of Criminal Record Detected</i>	<b>Evidence of Self-Report of Any Criminal Offense</b>			
	<b>Yes</b>		<b>No</b>	
	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
<b><i>Evidence of Conviction:</i></b>				
Felony	57	71.3	23	28.8
Misdemeanor	2,775	62.5	1,664	37.5
Felony or Misdemeanor	2,832	62.7	1,687	37.3
Felony or Misdemeanor requiring waiver <sup>1</sup>	1,690	66.4	855	33.6
<b><i>Regardless of Conviction Status:</i></b>				
Felony	511	65.3	272	34.7
Misdemeanor	3,763	60.7	2,440	39.3
Felony or Misdemeanor	3,891	60.8	2,509	39.2

<sup>1</sup>The Air Force, Army, Marine Corps, and Navy require moral waivers for subjects with one felony conviction. The Air Force, Marine Corps, and Navy require moral waivers for subjects with *one* or more misdemeanor convictions. The Army requests moral waivers only if the subject has *two* or more misdemeanor convictions.

## ANALYSIS

To identify associations between early separation, adverse separation, criminal backgrounds, moral character waiver issuance, and self-reports, rates and odds were calculated controlling for military branch, military component, and each of the branch-component combinations. Logistic regression was used to identify the independent and combined effects of self-reporting, waiver issuance, and detection of criminal convictions on early separation and adverse separation. To determine the nature of the relationship when found, cross-tabulations were conducted to identify rates of early and adverse separation within different combinations of self-reporting, waiver issuance, and criminal convictions.

## RESULTS

The results in this section show the relationships between self-disclosure of criminal conduct, evidence of moral character waivers, and preservice criminal history on early separation and adverse separation.

### IMPACT OF FAILURE TO SELF-REPORT ON WAIVER RATES AMONG THOSE WITH WAIVERABLE CONVICTIONS

A previous study (Neal & Buck, 2008) showed a substantial disconnect between rates at which criminal offense information was found through record checks and rates at which moral character waivers had been issued. Moral character waiver screening relies largely on applicants' self-admissions whereas security background screening conducts checks in all locations where applicants lived, worked, or went to school over a several-year period, in addition to any self-admissions. Therefore, lower rates of waiver documentation relative to rates at which criminal records were found through security screening may have been due to omissions of applicants' arrests and charges on their SF-86 at the time of recruitment.

Table 9 shows the self-reporting rates among subjects with and without criminal convictions, controlling for evidence of moral character waivers having been issued. Results from groups with 20 or fewer subjects are noted with double en dashes and are not discussed due to the lack of reliability of rates shown.

Consistent with findings from prior studies, only 27.9% (n=710) of the 2,545 applicants with records of criminal convictions had documentation of moral character waivers. Conversely, nearly three fourths (72.1%) did not.

Of primary interest was column 2, where subjects were known to have criminal convictions based on security screening record checks but moral character waivers were not in DMDC records. Overall, 42% had not self-reported. Among subjects with evidence of convictions, those in the Air Force had the highest rate (57.9%) of omitting criminal record information on the SF-86, followed by the Navy and Marine Corps at approximately 50%. The lowest percentage of subjects with convictions who did not report information about any arrests was found for the Army at approximately 30%. Table 9 shows that about half of the difference in criminal record detection and waiver issuance rates could be explained by applicants' failing to report information about arrests.

The lowest rates of self-reporting were found as expected in Column 4. Between 5% and 20% of subjects who had no evidence of waiverable convictions or moral character waivers indicated some type of arrest or conviction on their PSQs. For Column 3, where conviction records were not found but moral character waivers were issued, the rates of self-reporting were higher. As with Column 4, these were likely to be reports of offenses for which charges were dropped, subjects were acquitted, or convictions were for nonmisdemeanor traffic fines of over \$150 for violations not involving drugs or alcohol.

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**Table 9**  
**Percentage of Subjects Entering the Military for the First Time with Initial NACLC**  
**or SSBI Investigations who Did Not Self-Report Criminal Offenses Based on**  
**Preservice Criminal History, Criminal Conduct Status, and Military**  
**Characteristics**

	Column 1		Column 2		Column 3		Column 4	
	Evidence of Criminal Conviction(s) Requiring Waiver (N=2,545)				No Evidence of Criminal Conviction(s) Requiring Waiver (N=30,167)			
	Waiver Issued		No Waiver Issued		Waiver Issued		No Waiver Issued	
	% No Self Report	Total N in Group	% No Self Report	Total N in Group	% No Self Report	Total N in Group	% No Self Report	Total N in Group
Branch:								
Army	4.3	392	30.7	775	17.0	441	82.1	19,498
Navy	3.3	61	51.1	282	28.1	57	88.6	1,334
Air Force	--	--	57.9	76	--	--	91.7	420
Marine Corps	25.0	244	49.3	702	61.9	415	87.5	7,990
Component:								
Regular	12.0	633	41.4	1,339	37.4	831	82.8	21,993
Reserves	11.6	43	47.7	302	50.7	67	88.1	3,914
Guard	5.9	34	37.6	194	29.6	27	87.0	3,335
Branch-Component:								
Army Regular	4.4	344	27.8	540	15.8	400	80.2	14,092
Army Reserves	--	--	32.7	55	--	--	87.4	2,112
Army Guard	5.9	34	38.9	180	29.6	27	86.9	3,294
Navy Regular	3.6	55	45.2	135	30.8	52	86.4	627
Navy Reserves	--	--	56.5	147	--	--	90.5	707
Air Force Regular	--	--	66.7	60	--	--	91.4	362
Air Force Reserves	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Air Force Guard	--	--	--	--	--	--	95.1	41
Marine Corps Regular	25.3	221	50.3	604	61.9	367	87.4	6,912
Marine Corps Reserves	21.7	23	42.9	98	62.5	48	87.9	1,078
TOTAL:	11.7	710	42.1	1,835	38.2	925	84.0	29,242

The highest self-reporting rates in Table 9 (i.e., lowest omission rates) were found, as expected, in column 1. With the exception of the Marine Corps, the rates of PSQs missing self-reporting information when moral character waivers or conviction records were documented were 6% or lower. The rates for the Reserve and Guard components overall were higher than 6%, but these were due to the influence of the Marine Corps applicants. For the Marines, 1 in 4 of PSQs submitted by subjects who received moral character waivers and who had at least misdemeanor criminal convictions did not have any arrest information documented on the PSQs.

To better understand what may account for the disparities for the Marine Corps, Table 10 diagnoses other sources of information for the 83 subjects who were represented by the 11.7% of 710 applicants in Column 1 of Table 9 who had at least misdemeanor level criminal convictions and moral character waivers but who did not have self-reported arrests on their SF 86. Over 40% of the Marines at issue had unfavorable FBI criminal record checks, so waivers could have been issued following return of results from those checks. FBI record checks and minor traffic

violations together accounted for nearly 60% of the 61 Marine Corps applicants who had criminal records, moral character waivers, but not self-reported arrests.

For the Marine Corps Reserve component, taking these factors into account could explain 100% of the cases where self-reporting information was missing in spite of the detection of criminal records and documentation of waivers. For the Marine Corps regular component, taking these factors into account may have explained about 50% (30 of 56) of the cases where self-reports were missing while convictions and waivers were on record.

**Table 10**  
**Number and Percentage of Subjects Entering the Military for the First Time with Initial NACLC or SSBI Investigations with Waiverable Offenses, Moral character waivers, but Without Self-Reported Criminal Offenses by FBI Criminal Record Check Results and Waiver Type**

Military Characteristics*	Unfavorable FBI Record Check		Minor Traffic Waivers ONLY		Unfavorable FBI or Minor Traffic Waiver ONLY		Total N without self-reports
	N	% (row)	N	% (row)	N	% (row)	
<b>Branch:</b>							
Army	11	64.7	2	11.8	13	76.5	17
Navy	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	2
Air Force	1	33.3	0	0.0	1	33.3	3
Marine Corps	24	39.3	12	19.7	35	57.4	61
<b>Component:</b>							
Regular	32	42.1	11	14.5	42	55.3	76
Reserves	4	80.0	1	20.0	5	100.0	5
Guard	0	0.0	2	100.0	2	100.0	2
<b>Branch-Component:</b>							
Army Regular	11	73.3	0	0.0	11	73.3	15
Army Guard	0	0.0	2	100.0	2	100.0	2
Navy Regular	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	2
Air Force Regular	1	33.3	0	0.0	1	33.3	3
Marine Corps Regular	20	35.7	11	19.6	30	53.6	56
Marine Corps Reserves	4	80.0	1	20.0	5	100.0	5
<b>TOTAL:</b>	36	43.4	14	16.9	49	59.0	83

\*Excludes Branch-Components with 0 applicants in category based on Table 9

As mentioned above, Table 9 also indicated self-report omissions for 38.2% (n=353) of the 925 applicants who had waivers issued but who did not have criminal convictions identified through local agency criminal record checks. As with data in Column 1 of Table 9, without criminal record hits or self-reports, it was not clear on what basis the waivers were issued. Table 11 diagnoses whether the disparity could be explained through presence of FBI criminal records or through issuance of waivers for minor traffic offenses that were not required to be reported by applicants on their PSQs or documented if found by investigators.

Unfavorable FBI results or waivers for multiple minor traffic violation convictions accounted for about 18% of the Navy and 29% of the Army regular component applicants with moral character waivers but no records of criminal convictions or

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self-reports. The proportions of applicants in the regular components of the Army and Navy represented by this condition as a whole were also among the lowest, compared to the other branches and components.

Based on Table 9, both Marine Corps regular and reserve components had the highest percentages of subjects with moral character waivers but without local agency check hits or self-reports (approximately 60% of 415). Table 11 shows that approximately half of these 353 subjects had unfavorable FBI checks or waivers issued for minor traffic violations, leaving the other half unexplained.

**Table 11**  
**Number and Percentage of Subjects Entering the Military for the First Time with Initial NACLC or SSBI Investigations who were Issued Waivers without Self-Reported Criminal Offenses or Evidence of Waiverable Offenses by NAC Results and Waiver Type**

Military Characteristics	Unfavorable FBI Record Check		Minor Traffic Waivers ONLY		Unfavorable NAC or Minor Traffic Waiver ONLY		Total N, within group
	N	% (row)	N	% (row)	N	% (row)	
<b>Branch:</b>							
Army	22	29.3	5	6.7	25	33.3	75
Navy	2	12.5	1	6.3	3	18.8	16
Marine Corps	19	7.4	123	47.9	138	53.7	257
<b>Component:</b>							
Regular	41	13.2	112	36.0	148	47.6	311
Reserves	2	5.9	13	38.2	15	44.1	34
Guard	3	37.5	4	50.0	6	75.0	8
<b>Branch-Component:</b>							
Army Regular	18	28.6	1	1.6	18	28.6	63
Army Guard	3	37.5	4	50.0	6	75.0	8
Navy Regular	2	12.5	1	6.3	3	18.8	16
Marine Corps Regular	18	7.9	110	48.5	124	54.6	227
Marine Corps Reserves	1	3.3	13	43.3	14	46.7	30
<b>TOTAL:</b>	46	13.0	129	36.5	169	47.9	353

\*Excludes Branch-Components with fewer than 20 applicants in column 3 of Table 9

## STRENGTH OF ASSOCIATION OF SELF-REPORTING, WAIVERS, AND RECORDS ON ODDS OF EARLY SEPARATION AND ADVERSE SEPARATION

Table 12 shows which of criminal history screening methods—either alone or in combination with other methods—were statistically significantly associated with likelihood of early or adverse separation, holding all other variables constant. These results indicate the strength of the relationship, but not the direction. Directional relationships are examined in the following section.

In Table 12, low chi-square values suggest that knowing applicants' classification with respect to a given screening source provided no information about the

likelihood of their separating from the military early or for adverse reasons. Such effects were deemed not significant.

Among the independent effects, self-reporting was significantly associated with likelihood of adverse separation ( $\chi^2=15.0$ ,  $p<.001$ ), but not with higher likelihoods of early separation ( $\chi^2=.1$ ,  $p=.798$ ). Conversely, documentation of waivers was strongly associated with likelihood of early separation ( $\chi^2=36.8$ ,  $p<.001$ ), but not adverse separation ( $\chi^2=.7$ ,  $p=.404$ ). Presence of records of criminal convictions was significantly associated with both early separation ( $\chi^2=10.9$ ,  $p<.001$ ) and adverse separation ( $\chi^2=6.5$ ,  $p<.05$ ).

**Table 12**  
**Likelihood Ratio Tests of Association between Criminal History Screening on Odds of Early and Adverse Separation: New Military Applicants with NACLC or SSBI Investigations Closed in 2003 or 2004**

<i>Influences</i>	<i>Early Separation</i>		<i>Adverse Separation</i>	
	<i>Chi-Square</i>	<i>Sig.</i>	<i>Chi-Square</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
<b>Single Influences</b>				
Evidence of self-reporting of preservice criminal offense(s)	0.1	0.798	15.0	0.000
No evidence of moral character waiver	36.8	0.000	0.7	0.404
Evidence of misdemeanor or felony offense(s) requiring waivers	10.9	0.001	6.5	0.011
<b>Combined Influences</b>				
Evidence of self-reporting of preservice criminal offense(s) <u>and</u> no evidence of moral character waiver(s)	21.5	0.000	0.0	0.981
Evidence of self-reporting of preservice criminal offense(s) <u>and</u> misdemeanor or felony offense(s) requiring waivers	12.7	0.000	1.3	0.254
No evidence of moral character waiver(s) <u>and</u> evidence of misdemeanor or felony offense(s) requiring waivers	14.8	0.000	0.0	0.924
Evidence of self-reporting of preservice criminal offense(s) <u>and</u> misdemeanor or felony offense(s) requiring waivers <u>and</u> no evidence of moral character waiver(s)	14.4	0.000	0.0	0.896

N=32,712, all df=1

Based on chi-square values, documentation of moral character waivers had the strongest association with likelihood of early separation. Self-disclosure of preservice criminal offenses was most strongly associated with separation for unfavorable reasons. Among the possible combined effects, none was statistically significantly associated with adverse separation.

With respect to early separation, however, significant combined effects were found for each of the possible two- and three-way combinations. Based on the chi-square

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values, the strongest association with likelihood of early separation was found for the combined effect of self-reports with waiver issuance ( $\chi^2=21.5$ ,  $p<.001$ ). The interaction of all three effects on early separation was also significant ( $\chi^2=14.4$ ,  $p<.001$ ).

While Table 12 showed the presence and strength of association between independent and combined effects of self-reports, waivers, and criminal convictions, it does not provide information on the direction of the associations. Subsequent tables provide more information about whether the independent and combined effects increase or decrease rates and likelihood of early or adverse separation.

### **RATE OF EARLY SEPARATION AND ADVERSE SEPARATION BASED ON INDEPENDENT EFFECTS OF SELF-REPORTING, MORAL CHARACTER WAIVERS, AND RESULTS OF CRIMINAL RECORD CHECKS**

Table 12 indicated independent significant associations between moral character waivers and criminal conviction records and applicants' likelihood of separating early from the military but not between self-reporting and early separation. Table 13 shows that the rate of applicants separating early was 14.1% ( $n=4,378$ ) among subjects who did not have moral character waivers compared with 9.1% ( $n=148$ ) for those that did. The rate of early separation for applicants with criminal conviction records was 11.7% ( $n=298$ ) compared with 14.0% ( $n=4,228$ ) of those without.

As reported in Table 12 above, self-reporting of and conviction records for criminal arrests were significantly associated with likelihood of adverse separation. While statistically significant, the strategic significance is questionable in that the adverse separation rate among those who did self-report arrests on the PSQs was 5.4% ( $n=377$ ) compared with a 4.3% ( $n=1,119$ ) adverse separation rate among those who did not self-report arrests. Similarly, the adverse separation rate for those who had criminal conviction records was 5.6% ( $n=143$ ) compared with 4.5% ( $n=1,353$ ) among those without evidence of criminal convictions.



**Table 13**  
**Rates of Early and Adverse Separation by Self-Reports, Waivers, and Conviction**  
**Records of Criminal Backgrounds for Applicants Joining the Military for the First**  
**Time with Initial NACLC or SSBI Investigations Closed in 2003 or 2004**

<b>Criminal Conduct Indicators</b>	<b>Early Separation</b>		<b>Adverse Separation</b>		<b>Total (Row N)</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>N</b>	
Self-report of criminal arrests					
Yes	13.7	953	5.4	377	6,935
No	13.9	3,573	4.3	1,119	25,777
Documentation of moral waiver					
Yes	9.1	148	4.2	68	1,635
No	14.1	4,378	4.6	1,428	31,077
Criminal conviction records					
Yes	11.7	298	5.6	143	2,545
No	14.0	4,228	4.5	1,353	30,167
<b>Total</b>	<b>13.8</b>	<b>4,526</b>	<b>4.6</b>	<b>1,496</b>	<b>32,712</b>

### **RATES OF EARLY SEPARATION BASED ON COMBINED EFFECTS OF SELF-REPORTING, MORAL CHARACTER WAIVERS, AND RESULTS OF CRIMINAL RECORD CHECKS**

Table 12 showed independent effects of criminal conviction records and moral character waivers on likelihood of early separation. These independent effects, however, interacted with self-reporting in their association with early separation, although not for adverse separation. Since none of the combined effects corresponds significantly to adverse separation, the remainder of the results will focus on the combined effects of self-reporting, waiver issuance, and preservice criminal history only on early separation.

Table 14 provides the rates of early separation within conditions of criminal records, moral character waivers, and self-reporting broken out by military branch and component. Frequencies for the rates shown in Table 14 are provided in Appendix A. Cells with double en dashes represent groups with fewer than 20 subjects; due to the small size, results from these groups are not reliable.

The rate of early separation for the population as a whole was 13.8%. Within conditions of self-reporting, moral character waivers, and conviction records, the highest early separation rates overall were found among those to whom waivers were not issued, ranging from 12.2% to 15.2%. By comparison, the early separation rate among applicants who were issued moral character waivers ranged from 7.1% to 10.8%.

The highest rate of early separation, 15.2%, pertained to applicants who self-reported arrests but for whom waivers were not issued and criminal records were not found. The second highest, at 14.0%, was associated with applicants who had

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**Table 14**  
**Percentage of NACLC and SSBI Non-Prior Service Applicants with Early Separation from the Military by Evidence of Self-Report of Criminal History, Moral character waiver Issuance, and History of Preservice Waiverable Misdemeanor or Felony Offense(s)**

Percent Early Separation Out of Total Population: Military Status	Evidence of Self-Report (N=6,935)				No Evidence of Self-Report (N=25,777)				Total # of subjects (N=32,712)
	Moral character waiver Issued (N=1,199)		No Moral character waiver Issued (N=5,736)		Moral character waiver Issued (N=436)		No Moral character waiver Issued (N=25,341)		
	Offense Found (N=627)	No Offense Found (N=572)	Offense Found (N=1,063)	No Offense Found (N=4,673)	Offense Found (N=83)	No Offense Found (N=353)	Offense Found (N=772)	No Offense Found (N=24,569)	
Branch:									
Army	11.2	14.2	16.4	18.5	35.3	22.7	21.4	18.5	18.3
Navy	11.9	7.3	15.9	18.4	--	--	23.6	19.8	19.0
Air Force	--	--	18.8	17.1	--	--	9.1	8.1	9.2
Marine Corps	3.3	1.9	3.9	2.9	4.9	2.7	4.0	2.9	3.0
Component:									
Regular	8.3	9.8	10.1	13.7	9.2	4.8	9.5	12.0	11.9
Reserves	18.4	18.2	21.5	26.7	40.0	23.5	27.1	23.3	23.7
Guard	9.4	--	14.0	15.2	--	--	15.1	15.3	15.1
Branch-Component:									
Army Regular	10.9	14.5	16.2	17.9	--	--	24.0	17.8	17.7
Army Reserves	21.4	20.0	29.7	30.8	--	--	27.8	28.0	28.3
Army Guard	9.4	5.3	12.7	15.1	--	--	14.3	15.3	15.1
Navy Regular	7.5	2.8	10.8	7.1	--	--	13.1	13.3	11.5
Navy Reserves	--	--	21.9	32.8	--	--	31.3	25.3	26.5
Air Force Regular	--	--	10.0	12.9	--	--	7.5	7.3	7.6
Air Force Reserves	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	20.0	26.3
Air Force Guard	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	10.3	16.4
Marine Corps Regular	3.0	0.7	2.0	1.1	1.8	0.9	2.0	1.3	1.4
Marine Corps Reserves	5.6	11.1	14.3	14.6	40.0	16.7	19.0	13.0	13.5
TOTAL:	8.9	10.1	12.2	15.2	10.8	7.1	13.3	14.0	13.8

no indications of criminal involvements from any source. The third highest, at 13.3%, belonged to subjects who did not self-disclose arrests and who did not have moral character waivers documented but for whom criminal conviction records were found. About 12% of applicants who self-disclosed arrests but for whom records were not found and to whom waivers were not issued failed to complete their service obligations.

The lowest early separation rate of 7.1% was for applicants who did not self-disclose arrests and for whom convictions records were not found, but for whom moral character waivers were issued. Consistent with findings shown in Table 11, some of these cases may be explained by applicants who admitted to traffic convictions that were not required to be reported by applicants on their PSQs or by investigators in their ROIs.

Of the military branches, the highest rates of early separation were found within the Navy; in this study, approximately 1 in 5 subjects who joined the Navy ended up separating before their terms of service were completed. The Air Force and Marine Corps showed the lowest rates of early separation, at 9.2% and 3.0%, respectively. About 18% of Army personnel left the Armed Forces before completing their service obligations. Within branches, the rates of early separation in the Reserves tended to be higher than those in the Regular components.

Because of the clear differences in separation rates within branches and components of the Armed Forces, further analyses focused on the effects of self-reporting, waiver issuance, and criminal history status on: (1) rates of separation within each branch relative to the rate of separation within the military as a whole, and (2) rates of separation within each branch compared to the rate of separation for that branch as a whole.

### **RELATIVE ODDS OF EARLY SEPARATION ON SELF-REPORTING, MORAL CHARACTER WAIVERS, AND RESULTS OF CRIMINAL RECORD CHECKS**

Odds represent the probability of an outcome occurring relative to the probability of it not occurring. In this study, the odds of early separation represented the likelihood of subjects separating early compared to the probability of them completing their terms of service.

Odds ratios, or relative odds, compare the odds of a certain outcome within one group to the odds of that outcome within another group. In the sections that follow, the odds ratios of early separation based on self-reporting, moral character waiver, and criminal conviction status are examined relative to the population average, and within military branches, relative to each respective branch average.

As shown in Table 15, the odds value of early separation based on all military applicants in the study was 0.161. The overall odds of early separation varied by military branch. The highest odds were found for Navy (0.234) and Army (0.225).

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Subjects in the Marine Corps had the lowest odds of early separation (0.031), followed by Air Force (0.101).

**Table 15**  
**Odds of Early or Adverse Separation by Military Branch**

<b><i>Military Branch</i></b>	<b>Odds of Early Separation</b>
Army	0.225
Navy	0.234
Air Force	0.101
Marine Corps	0.031
Military Population	0.161

### **Relative to the Average Odds for the Population**

Table 16 shows the odds ratio of early separation for applicants in each military branch and component based on self-reporting, waiver, criminal history, and military service compared to the odds of early separation for the population as a whole. In Table 16, an odds ratio of 1.000 indicates that the likelihood of early separation for a particular group is equal to that for the population as a whole. When the odds ratio exceeds 1.000, it indicates increased odds of early separation, relative to the population average; when the odds ratio falls below 1.000, it signifies that subjects within that group have decreased odds of early separation. Cells with double en dashes indicate that 20 or fewer subjects are represented within that group, so results cannot be considered reliable.

The highest odds of early separation relative to the population as a whole tended to be found among applicants without moral waivers. For the population as a whole, the highest likelihood of early separation pertained to those who self-reported arrests but for whom waivers were not issued and records were not found (1.114). The lowest odds of early separation relative to the population average occurred with applicants for whom criminal offense information was documented through all three screening sources (.611) or through only waiver processing (.475).

**Table 16**  
**Odds Ratios of Early Separation for Subjects Joining the Military for the First Time with Initial NACLC or SSBI**  
**Investigations by Evidence of Self-Report of Criminal History, Moral character waiver Issuance, and History of Preservice**  
**Waiverable Offenses**

Military Status	Evidence of Self-Report (N=6,935)				No Evidence of Self-Report (N=25,777)				Total # of subjects (N=32,712)
	Moral character waiver Issued (N=1,199)		No Moral character waiver Issued (N=5,736)		Moral character waiver Issued (N=436)		No Moral character waiver Issued (N=25,341)		
	Offense Found (N=627)	No Offense Found (N=572)	Offense Found (N=1,063)	No Offense Found (N=4,673)	Offense Found (N=83)	No Offense Found (N=353)	Offense Found (N=772)	No Offense Found (N=24,569)	
Branch:									
Army	0.785	1.031	1.221	1.417	--	1.825	1.698	1.417	1.398
Navy	0.838	0.492	1.181	1.406	--	--	1.925	1.537	1.458
Air Force	--	--	1.437	1.288	--	--	0.623	0.545	0.632
Marine Corps	0.211	0.121	0.255	0.186	0.322	0.174	0.263	0.186	0.192
Component:									
Regular	0.561	0.677	0.698	0.993	0.632	0.316	0.657	0.850	0.844
Reserves	1.406	1.384	1.708	2.265	--	1.916	2.313	1.893	1.931
Guard	0.644	--	1.018	1.120	--	--	1.105	1.122	1.110
Branch-Component:									
Army Regular	0.765	1.060	1.200	1.358	--	1.465	1.967	1.349	1.335
Army Reserves	--	--	2.635	2.775	--	--	--	2.416	2.463
Army Guard	0.644	--	0.908	1.106	--	--	1.038	1.128	1.108
Navy Regular	0.508	0.178	0.755	0.473	--	--	0.940	0.954	0.810
Navy Reserves	--	--	1.744	3.045	--	--	2.841	2.111	2.242
Air Force Regular	--	--	--	0.923	--	--	0.505	0.487	0.513
Air Force Reserves	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Air Force Guard	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	0.712	1.218
Marine Corps Regular	0.195	0.045	0.127	0.072	0.113	0.055	0.125	0.084	0.086
Marine Corps Reserves	--	--	1.038	1.066	--	1.246	1.465	0.928	0.970
TOTAL:	0.611	0.703	0.868	1.114	0.757	0.475	0.959	1.013	1.000

## RESULTS

To more easily view differences between different branches and components, Table 17 lists, in descending order, the odds ratios presented in Table 16 for all groups with more than 20 subjects. The higher the odds ratio, the greater the likelihood of early separation for subjects within that group.

Table 17 shows that relative to the population odds of early separation, the highest odds of early separation were found for applicants in the Navy and Army Reserves (3.045 and 2.775 respectively). Navy Reserves who were only known to have convictions through criminal record checks had the second highest likelihood of early separation (2.841) relative to the population as a whole.

Applicants in the Marine Corps Regular component and, to a lesser extent, Air Force applicants in any component had among the lowest odds of early separation relative to the population, regardless of detection of criminal involvements from any source. Due to clear component differences in relative odds regardless of self-reporting, waivers, and criminal record check results, odds ratios were calculated within each military branch relative to the respective branch average odds. These results are shown in Tables 18 through 21.

**Table 17**  
**Rank Comparison of Odds Ratios of Early Separation for Subjects Joining the**  
**Military for the First Time with Initial NACLC or SSBI Investigations, Based on**  
**Overall Military Average**

Rank	Military Characteristic		Evidence of Criminal Past			Odds Ratio Compared to Average Military Odds <sup>a</sup>	Odds of Early Separation	n (row)
	Branch	Component	Self-Report	Moral character waiver	Waiver-able Offenses			
1	Navy	Reserves	Yes	No	No	3.045	0.490	67
2	Navy	Reserves	No	No	Yes	2.841	0.457	83
3	Army	Reserves	Yes	No	No	2.775	0.447	266
4	Army	Reserves	Yes	No	Yes	2.635	0.424	37
5	Army	Reserves	No	No	No	2.416	0.389	1,846
6	Navy	Reserves	No	No	No	2.111	0.340	640
7	Army	Regular	No	No	Yes	1.967	0.317	150
8	Navy	Reserves	Yes	No	Yes	1.744	0.281	64
9	Army	Regular	No	Yes	No	1.465	0.236	42
10	Marine Corps	Reserves	No	No	Yes	1.465	0.236	63
11	Army	Regular	Yes	No	No	1.358	0.219	2,788
12	Army	Regular	No	No	No	1.349	0.217	11,304
13	Marine Corps	Reserves	No	Yes	No	1.246	0.201	30
14	Army	Regular	Yes	No	Yes	1.200	0.193	390
15	Army	Guard	No	No	No	1.128	0.182	2,863
16	Army	Guard	Yes	No	No	1.106	0.178	431
17	Marine Corps	Reserves	Yes	No	No	1.066	0.172	130
18	Army	Regular	Yes	Yes	No	1.060	0.171	337
19	Army	Guard	No	No	Yes	1.038	0.167	56
20	Marine Corps	Reserves	Yes	No	Yes	1.038	0.167	70
↑ Increased Odds ↑			↓ Decreased Odds ↓					
21	Navy	Regular	No	No	No	0.954	0.154	542
22	Navy	Regular	No	No	Yes	0.940	0.151	61
23	Marine Corps	Reserves	No	No	No	0.928	0.149	948
24	Air Force	Regular	Yes	No	No	0.923	0.149	31
25	Army	Guard	Yes	No	Yes	0.908	0.146	110
26	Army	Regular	Yes	Yes	Yes	0.765	0.123	329
27	Navy	Regular	Yes	No	Yes	0.755	0.122	74
28	Air Force	Guard	No	No	No	0.712	0.115	39
29	Army	Guard	Yes	Yes	Yes	0.644	0.104	32
30	Navy	Regular	Yes	Yes	Yes	0.508	0.082	53
31	Air Force	Regular	No	No	Yes	0.505	0.081	40
32	Air Force	Regular	No	No	No	0.487	0.078	331
33	Navy	Regular	Yes	No	No	0.473	0.076	85
34	Marine Corps	Regular	Yes	Yes	Yes	0.195	0.031	165
35	Navy	Regular	Yes	Yes	No	0.178	0.029	36
36	Marine Corps	Regular	Yes	No	Yes	0.127	0.020	300
37	Marine Corps	Regular	No	No	Yes	0.125	0.020	304
38	Marine Corps	Regular	No	Yes	Yes	0.113	0.018	56
39	Marine Corps	Regular	No	No	No	0.084	0.013	6,041
40	Marine Corps	Regular	Yes	No	No	0.072	0.012	871
41	Marine Corps	Regular	No	Yes	No	0.055	0.009	227
42	Marine Corps	Regular	Yes	Yes	No	0.045	0.007	140

<sup>a</sup> Overall odds of early separation for military population was 0.161.

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### Relative to Average Odds Within Military Branch

**Army.** As shown in Table 18, the highest odds of early separation within the Army population as a whole were found for Reserve component applicants, with odds ratios ranging from approximately 1.7 to 2.0. Within this group, rates of early separation were only slightly higher among applicants who were not issued waivers but were known through self-reports and/or record checks to have had contact with law enforcement. For the Regular component, the highest odds of early separation within the Army pertained to applicants whose only record of criminal involvement was based on the security screening record check. The lowest odds of early separation in the Army were found for Regular and Guard Component applicants who self-reported arrest information, who were issued waivers, and who were found to have convictions based on security screening criminal record checks.

**Table 18**  
**Rank Comparison of Odds Ratios of Early Separation for Army Subjects Joining the Military for the First Time with Initial NACLC, or SSBI Investigations, Based on Army Averages<sup>1</sup>**

Rank	Military Component	Evidence of Criminal Conduct			Odds Ratio Compared to Odds for Respective Branch	Odds of Early Separation	N (row)
		Self Report	Waiver	Criminal Record			
1	Reserves	Yes	No	No	1.986	0.447	266
2	Reserves	Yes	No	Yes	1.885	0.424	37
3	Reserves	No	No	No	1.729	0.389	1,846
4	Regular	No	No	Yes	1.407	0.317	150
5	Regular	No	Yes	No	1.049	0.236	63
↑ Increased Odds ↑		↓ Decreased Odds ↓					
6	Regular	Yes	No	No	0.971	0.219	2,788
7	Regular	No	No	No	0.965	0.217	11,304
8	Regular	Yes	No	Yes	0.859	0.193	390
9	Guard	No	No	No	0.807	0.182	2,863
10	Guard	Yes	No	No	0.791	0.178	431
11	Regular	Yes	Yes	No	0.758	0.171	337
12	Guard	No	No	Yes	0.743	0.167	70
13	Guard	Yes	No	Yes	0.650	0.146	110
14	Regular	Yes	Yes	Yes	0.548	0.123	329
15	Guard	Yes	Yes	Yes	0.461	0.104	32

<sup>1</sup> Overall odds of early separation for Army personnel were 0.225.

**Navy.** Table 19 provides odds of early separation for different components within the Navy relative to the Navy population as a whole, based on self-reporting, waiver issuance, and criminal conviction record detection. The Navy Reserve component, on the whole, had the highest likelihood of early separation.

Within the Navy Reserve component, the highest likelihoods of early separation were found for applicants without waivers but who either self-reported at least one criminal arrest or serious traffic violation over \$150 (2.095) or had criminal convictions detected through state or local agency criminal record checks (1.954).



Within the regular component, the highest early separation rate was found for applicants who had no indications of law enforcement involvements (.656). The second highest rates were found for applicants who were known through record checks alone to have convictions (.647) or through both self-reports and record checks but not waiver documentation (.519).

**Table 19**  
**Rank Comparison of Odds Ratios of Early Separation for Navy Subjects Joining the Military for the First Time with Initial NACLC, or SSBI Investigations, Based on Navy Averages<sup>1</sup>**

<i>Rank</i>	<i>Military Component</i>	<i>Evidence of Criminal Conduct</i>			<i>Odds Ratio Compared to Odds for Respective Branch</i>	<i>Odds of Early Separation</i>	<i>N (row)</i>
		<i>Self Report</i>	<i>Waiver</i>	<i>Criminal Record</i>			
1	Reserves	Yes	No	No	2.095	0.490	67
2	Reserves	No	No	Yes	1.954	0.457	83
3	Reserves	No	No	No	1.452	0.340	640
4	Reserves	Yes	No	Yes	1.200	0.281	64
↑ <b>Increased Odds</b> ↑						↓ <b>Decreased Odds</b> ↓	
5	Regular	No	No	No	0.656	0.154	542
6	Regular	No	No	Yes	0.647	0.151	61
7	Regular	Yes	No	Yes	0.519	0.122	74
8	Regular	Yes	Yes	Yes	0.350	0.082	53
9	Regular	Yes	No	No	0.325	0.076	85
10	Regular	Yes	Yes	No	0.122	0.029	36

<sup>1</sup> Overall odds of early separation for Navy personnel were 0.234.

The representation of the Air Force in the population was too low to enable many comparisons by components, as can be seen in Table 20. For the four conditions that could be assessed, the highest likelihood of early separation compared to the Air Force applicants as a whole was found for the Regular component applicants who self-reported at least one arrest but were not issued waivers or found to have criminal convictions (1.471). For all groups with at least one source of information of criminal involvement, the Ns were among the smallest in the study, so results may be unreliable.

## RESULTS

**Table 20**  
**Rank Comparison of Odds Ratios of Early Separation for Subjects Joining the**  
**Military for the First Time with Initial NACLC or SSBI Investigations, Based on Air**  
**Force Averages<sup>1</sup>**

<i>Rank</i>	<i>Military Component</i>	<i>Evidence of Criminal Conduct</i>			<i>Odds Ratio Compared to Odds for Respective Branch</i>	<i>Odds of Early Separation</i>	<i>N (row)</i>
		<i>Self Report</i>	<i>Waiver</i>	<i>Criminal Record</i>			
1	Regular	Yes	No	No	1.471	0.149	31
2	Guard	No	No	No	1.135	0.115	39
↑ <b>Increased Odds</b> ↑		↓ <b>Decreased Odds</b> ↓					
3	Regular	No	No	Yes	0.805	0.081	40
4	Regular	No	No	No	0.776	0.078	331

<sup>1</sup> Overall odds of early separation for Air Force personnel were 0.101.

Table 21 shows that the Marine Corps Reserve component members were much more likely to separate early from the military compared to the regular component Marine members. The highest likelihood of separation within the Marine Corps was found for Reserve members who were known to have criminal convictions only through the criminal record checks (7.610); they neither self-reported nor had waivers issued.

Unlike the other branches, the second highest likelihood of early separation was found for Marine Reserve members whose only source of criminal background was waiver documentation. The N for this group was among the smallest, however, so the results could be unreliable. Otherwise, the highest likelihoods of early separation within the Marine Reserve component was found for applicants who self-reported arrests and/or had records of conviction detected through security screening but who did not have waivers documented.

Within the Marine Regular component, the lowest likelihood of early separation was found among applicants where waivers were the only source of conviction information (.287) or where waivers were documented for subjects who self-admitted offense information on their SF-86 (.233). Overall, however, the Marine Regular component odds of separation were very low (.03 or lower).

**Table 21**  
**Rank Ordering of Odds Ratios of Early Separation for Marine Corps Applicants**  
**Joining the Military for the First Time with Initial NACLC or SSBI Investigations,**  
**Based on Marine Corps Averages<sup>1</sup>**

<i>Rank</i>	<i>Military Component</i>	<i>Evidence of Criminal Conduct</i>			<i>Odds Ratio Compared to Odds for Respective Branch</i>	<i>Odds of Early Separation</i>	<i>N (row)</i>
		<i>Self Report</i>	<i>Waiver</i>	<i>Criminal Record</i>			
1	Reserves	No	No	Yes	7.610	0.236	42
2	Reserves	No	Yes	No	6.469	0.201	30
3	Reserves	Yes	No	No	5.536	0.172	130
4	Reserves	Yes	No	Yes	5.391	0.167	56
5	Reserves	No	No	No	4.822	0.149	948
6	Regular	Yes	Yes	Yes	1.011	0.031	165
↑ <b>Increased Odds</b> ↑						↓ <b>Decreased Odds</b> ↓	
7	Regular	Yes	No	Yes	0.660	0.020	300
8	Regular	No	No	Yes	0.651	0.020	304
9	Regular	No	Yes	Yes	0.588	0.018	56
10	Regular	No	No	No	0.434	0.013	6,041
11	Regular	Yes	No	No	0.376	0.012	871
12	Regular	No	Yes	No	0.287	0.009	227
13	Regular	Yes	Yes	No	0.233	0.007	140

<sup>1</sup> Overall odds of early separation for Marine Corps personnel were 0.031.

The above findings suggest that, with respect to early separation, if subjects self-reported offenses or had waiverable offenses detected during local agency checks but moral character waivers were not issued, rates of early separation tended to be higher. This was especially true if the criminal record check was the only source of information about criminal involvements. One possible explanation for this finding is that the Military services separated personnel once criminal record information surfaced rather than issuing them waivers.

### DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Consistent with other study findings, this research identified differences in the rates at which criminal records were found in security clearance background investigations and criminal conduct waivers were issued during military entrance processing. These differences could be explained only in part by omissions by applicants on their security clearance questionnaires. At the same, significant numbers of cases were found where criminal conduct waivers were issued and applicants had omissions of criminal charges on their questionnaires. These findings highlight the importance of information sharing between the military accessions process and the security clearance background investigation process to ensure that decisionmakers in each have the most complete information possible.

The relationships between early or adverse separation and applicant self-reports, waiver, and preservice criminal history statuses were examined in this report. The results emphasized the importance of moral character waiver processing in mitigating the link between criminal backgrounds and early separation but not adverse separation. For adverse separation, having a criminal conviction record or omitting self-reports of criminal charges each had a statistically significant—though not necessarily practical—association with separation from the military for adverse reasons. While statistically significant, the effects on adverse separation were measured in differences of 1% or less, but this small difference may be due to the limits of using adverse separation codes documented at time of separation instead of drawing on the full range of in-service misconduct such as Article 15s and courts-martial.

With respect to early separation, if subjects self-reported offenses or had waivable offenses detected during local agency checks, but moral character waivers were not issued, rates of early separation tended to be higher. This was especially true for applicants with criminal involvements detected through results of criminal record checks that were processed after completion of SF-86 questionnaires and after waiver processing. This finding could reflect, though only in part, the impact of military branch intolerance for applicants who failed to disclose their criminal histories on the SF-86.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the overall findings in this report and the previous two reports in this series, the following recommendations are offered:

- **Recommendation:** As recommended in prior studies, the DUSD(CI&S) and USD(P&R) should evaluate whether optimal policy and procedures are in place for ensuring that the military services receive complete and timely results of security screening that surfaces information regarding their accessions' criminal backgrounds.
- **Recommendation:** If warranted, Recruiting Commands may want to review and strengthen, as necessary, policy and procedures for taking action against

## DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

applicants with criminal arrests and convictions who do not document such information as required on their PSQs.

- **Recommendation:** Recruiting Commands may want to consider expanding waiver processing for applicants who disclose any arrest information on their personnel security questionnaires. In particular, Recruiting Commands may want to establish operating procedures for acquiring more information on offenses that subjects report on their PSQs, including conviction status for all listed arrests.

Evidence in this report indicated that subjects were issued waivers even though they did not disclose any type of criminal conduct on their SF-86s; this indicated that the information was detected during another part of the in-processing procedure. In order to ensure that subjects' complete criminal histories are collected by personnel security investigators and available to security clearance adjudicators, the following recommendations are also provided:

- **Recommendation.** The USD(P&R) and The Office of the Deputy Under Secretary of Defense, Counterintelligence and Security (USD(I), DUSD(CI&S)) should consider establishing or reinforcing regulations that require accessions processing personnel to document all criminal arrest information requested on applicants' PSQs.
- **Recommendation.** DUSD(CI&S) and OPM should, in cooperation with USD(P&R), include checks of DMDC records of military waivers in security clearance background investigations of military personnel. Investigators should use this information to ensure that they have maximally complete coverage of subjects' criminal backgrounds.



## REFERENCES

- Neal, M.M., & Buck, K.R. (2008). *Greater information sharing needed between screening systems for military accessions and national security clearances*. Monterey, CA: Defense Personnel Security Research Center.
- Rose, A.E. (2007). *Options for using military waiver information in personnel security clearance investigations*. Monterey, CA: Defense Personnel Security Research Center.





**APPENDIX A:**  
**CELL FREQUENCIES FOR TABLE 14**

## APPENDIX A

**Table A-1**  
**Number of Subjects Joining the Military for the First Time with Initial NACLC or SSBI Initial Investigations by Military Characteristic, Self-Reporting Status, Waiver Issuance, and Preservice Criminal History**

Military Status	Evidence of Self-Report (N=6,935)				No Evidence of Self-Report (N=25,777)				Total # of subjects (row)
	Moral character waiver Issued (N=1,199)		No Moral character waiver Issued (N=5,736)		Moral character waiver Issued (N=436)		No Moral character waiver Issued (N=25,341)		
	Offense Found	No Offense Found	Offense Found	No Offense Found	Offense Found	No Offense Found	Offense Found	No Offense Found	
Branch:									
Army	375	366	537	3,485	17	75	238	16,013	21,106
Navy	59	41	138	152	2	16	144	1,182	1,734
Air Force	10	7	32	35	3	5	44	385	521
Marine Corps	183	158	356	1,001	61	257	346	6,989	9,351
Component:									
Regular	557	520	784	3,775	76	311	555	18,218	24,796
Reserves	38	33	158	465	5	34	144	3,449	4,326
Guard	32	19	121	433	2	8	73	2,902	3,590
Branch-Component:									
Army Regular	329	337	390	2,788	15	63	150	11,304	15,376
Army Reserves	14	10	37	266	0	4	18	1,846	2,195
Army Guard	32	19	110	431	2	8	70	2,863	3,535
Navy Regular	53	36	74	85	2	16	61	542	869
Navy Reserves	6	5	64	67	0	0	83	640	865
Air Force Regular	10	7	20	31	3	5	40	331	447
Air Force Reserves	0	0	1	2	0	0	1	15	19
Air Force Guard	0	0	11	2	0	0	3	39	55
Marine Corps Regular	165	140	300	871	56	227	304	6,041	8,104
Marine Corps Reserves	18	18	56	130	5	30	42	948	1,247
TOTAL:	627	572	1,063	4,673	83	353	772	24,569	32,712